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ATER ANNOUNCES HIS DECISION TO RECOMMEND POSTPONING NEW ORLEANS' MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

BATON ROUGE, LA – Secretary of State Al Ater announces that he will recommend to Governor Kathleen Blanco that she issue an executive order to postpone the Feb. 4 New Orleans' municipal elections, until no later than the next regularly scheduled statewide elections, Sept. 30 and Nov. 7. State law requires the Secretary of State to issue an emergency certification to the Governor when a state of emergency exists that would affect the electoral process.

“Even with the legislation recently passed by the legislature in the special session, the physical and technical obstacles are too great to overcome before Feb. 4,” Ater said. “The unavailability of polling places, difficulties in locating and training poll commissioners and workers for absentee balloting, and the huge task of recertifying and replacing damaged voting machines all create an emergency situation causing the postponement of the election.”

Ater and his staff will spend the next few weeks further analyzing conditions to seek the earliest date that he expects to be able to conduct the election, but said the elections will be held no later than Sept. 30.

Ater is also concerned that voters that want to participate, are able to participate. He also added that FEMA's delays in providing both financial and logistical assistance to the Secretary of State's office has hindered his ability to comfortably move forward with the election on its regularly scheduled date.

“We have to make certain that our registered voters' rolls are accurate,” Ater said. “We have to insure that those that are legally registered can participate, and those that are not legally registered will not be able to participate in this election that is so vital to the rebuilding of the community.”

Scheduled to appear on the ballot are New Orleans' municipal and parochial elections; including Mayor, all seven councilmember seats, Civil and Criminal Sheriff, Civil and Criminal Clerk of District Court, all seven assessors, and coroner. The officials to serve in the newly elected seats would have their term shortened by the length of the incumbents' additional time in office.

Also currently scheduled to be on the ballot is a special proposition election for Lakeview Crime Prevention District.

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